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UNCLAS OSLO 000238

SIPDIS

ASUNCION FOR DCM KEVIN JOHNSON
STOCKHOLM FOR FAS/PTHURSLAND

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: TBIO KFLU SENV EAGR ECON NO

SUBJECT: NORWAY AVIAN FLU RESPONSE UPDATE

REF: A. OSLO 1571

B. OSLO 1722

¶1. (U) Effective February 15, 2006, the Norwegian Food Safety Authority has reinstated (reftel A) a ban on open air poultry farming in eight counties in southern Norway. The move comes in response to the discovery of H5N1 infected birds in Rugen, Germany. Officials are preparing for the virus' eventual arrival in Norway as wild birds migrate north. Norwegian veterinary authorities are increasing their monitoring and inspection regimens and the public has been asked to assist by reporting sightings of sick or deceased wild birds. Public health authorities have released a pandemic action plan that details Norway's response to a potential pandemic.

¶2. (U) Norwegian Ministry of Agriculture officials stressed that the illness is currently confined to wild birds and that while migratory birds will likely bring the virus to Norway, the Ministry is working to limit potential spread of the virus to domestic foul by increasing blood testing for domestic poultry and closely monitoring the progress of the disease. Should domestic poultry be affected, the Norwegian government plans to compensate poultry farmers for any required culling. The majority of Norwegian poultry farms are concentrated in the southern third of the country. According to press reports, one dead swan was found in Oslo fjord on Wednesday but tests indicated that it did not have avian flu.

¶3. (U) On February 16, 2006, the Norwegian government published its Plan for Prevention and Measures for Combating Avian Flu. The plan had been in development for several months and was scheduled for release this week. In a news conference unveiling the document, Norwegian Minister of Agriculture and Food Terje Riis Johansen said that the avian flu virus is closing in on Norway but is not yet a critical problem. The plan includes measures to prevent infection, treat infected persons, and it defines response roles among public authorities should an outbreak occur. The plan is available (in Norwegian) at http://odin.dep.no/hod/norsk/048071-070109/do_k-bn.html. As reported earlier (refs a and b) Norway plans to broadly distribute anti-viral drugs and vaccines using the Norwegian national health system. Norway assumes a 30 percent infection rate should a pandemic become a reality and has plans to distribute treatment regimens to 1.4 million of its 4.5 million population. Norwegian health authorities have the power to impose quarantines, limit public events, and restrict travel in the event of a pandemic.
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